

ANNAMITE CIVILIZATION

the Portuguese was significant of the entry of a new factor upon the scene—European imperialism.

While the Arabs jealously guarded the secret of the sea route to the East, an occasional European succeeded in getting there by the over-land route. Of these the most famous was Marco Polo, who wrote of Champa and Annam though he may never have visited either kingdom. Not until the fifteenth century did the Portuguese begin to trade along the Annamite coast and as far inland as Cambodia. It was at the mouth of the Mekong River that the famous Camoens was shipwrecked.

Portuguese missionaries explored Angkor in 1570, a discovery which sank into oblivion until the nineteenth century. Portugal was not officially interested in Indo-China, but her soldiers and missionaries went there freely from neighbouring Macao, as did the Spanish priests and adventurers from Manila. Nowadays, after three centuries of mingling with the Cambodians, descendants of these early Portuguese have retained their names, customs, and religion.

By the opening of the seventeenth century, the Annamites were engaged in a brisk foreign commerce. At Fai-fo the Chinese and Japanese had long had trading posts, and it was to this market that the Portuguese first sent their ships. The Dutch East India Company was founded much later, in 1602, but it was not long before these formidable rivals of the Portuguese and Japanese made commerce there almost impossible. The Dutch began gradually to take the side of the Tonkinese in the North-South struggle, as a natural consequence of the Portuguese support of the Nguyens, but this did not increase their profits. In Cambodia, too, they suffered cruelly from the jealousy of the Portuguese, who managed to arouse even the tolerant

Khmers to massacre
 the few Dutch who had penetrated as far as their
 Court. The Governor
 of Batavia was strong enough to exact a money
 indemnity for this
 outrage but no commercial concessions. No European
 power could
 for long play an important role at the Khmer Court
 because Cam-
 bodia *s perpetual warfare with Siam and Annam was too
 ail-ab&orbing.

The English, at this time weak in comparison with
 the Dutch and
 Portuguese, were hunting trade in the Far East. A
 massacre of British
 merchants at Fai-fo in 1613 was not a propitious
 beginning, nor were
 they more successful in getting established in Tonkin.
 The rapacity
 of the Annamite mandarins, who either stole goods
 outright or set
 their own prices for what they took, forced them to
 close down their
 posts in 1697, three years before the more
 persevering Dutch. An
 attempt in 1702 to transfer their headquarters to
 Poulo Condore was